



# State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education  
301 Centennial Mall South • PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, NE 68509

**Country Inn & Suites**  
**5353 North 27th**  
**Lincoln, NE**  
**402-476-5353**

**December 14, 2004**  
**10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

## **MINUTES**

Present: *Sharon Bloechle, Don Crouch, Eileen Curry, Sue Gieschen, Gayle Hahn, Sandy Ham, Marc Hultine, David Jelinek, Les Kimmons, Tim Kolb, Frank Lloyd, Michael Newman, Vicki Rasmussen, Susan Rocker, Mark Schultz, Pearl Van Zandt, and Merwyn Vavrina*

Absent: *Kim Boyce and Kay Grone*

Minutes by *Cheryle Adams*

Gayle Hahn called the meeting to order

I Public Comment: None

II. Notice of Vacancies

A. State Board approved the new council members November 4<sup>th</sup> at the State Board meeting

There is one mandatory position still unfilled, that was held by Jack Shepard. Don will be contacting those people Jack has suggested. (Representative from Special Education)

III. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve agenda moved by Sharon Bloechle. Motion seconded by Sue Gieschen.  
Motion carried, agenda approved.

IV. Approval of Minutes from October 12, 2004

Motion moved by Sue Gieschen to approve the October 12, 2004 minutes. Motion seconded by Tim Kolb. Motion passed, minutes approved.

V. Director's Report (*Frank Lloyd*)

1. Rehabilitation Services Administration is promoting transition as a primary initiative for Vocational Rehabilitation. While RSA wants VR to focus on juniors and seniors, they also feel that younger students should be served as well.

Les commented on a teleconference he attended discussing IDEA and the new laws. They have dropped the 14-15 year old age group making it age 16 for transition. The 14-15 year old age group is no longer the schools responsibility for transition services. Les feels this is where VR is most important.

Frank commented that with the No Child Left Behind legislation, schools are increasingly concerned about teaching the basics of reading, writing and math. Test scores have been low for special education students. More and more schools feel they don't have time to provide transition services. We need to rethink our role with schools. The Commissioner of Education supports transition services and VR's involvement with the schools.

Sandy mentioned that the Parent Transition Planner has been changed according to law. Text has been edited to reflect this change and this should be back from the printer in a month.

2. There was discussion concerning the front-end process and the changes. There needs to be more dialog around what the person/consumer needs in order to be successful. Frank wants to continue the practice of administrative office staff evaluating the effectiveness of the Employment Discussion. This is when the specialist begins employment planning with consumers. Discussion while exploring more effective ways of providing this service.
3. There are a couple of committees working on employment planning readiness. They are taking a look at the process from the very beginning, emphasizing work traits and that VR is an employment-focused program. VR needs to outline the basic work requirements right from the very beginning, i.e., having appropriate dress, hygiene, being on time, etc. This would be reinforced so that when we get to placement, the individual understands what it takes to be successfully employed. Vic is on one of the committees to assure that consumer rights are supported.

Dave suggested having the employers coming in from the beginning to let consumers know what they want and expect. Focus needs to be on work and what is required to in order to be successful. The consumers need to demonstrate these skills.

4. Margy, Frank and Mel this past month have been visiting with all VR staff. They talked to staff individually about their job, their strengths, weaknesses and what they can contribute. They asked 10 – 11 questions designed to focus on the staff person. This helped to create a positive interchange. Staff were asked what they liked about their jobs and what they didn't like. Frank felt overall staff feel very good about what they do and the importance of the work. They will meet with all staff once each year.

They visited with the associates. Most commented that they like the variety — working with the consumer in a variety of settings. Everyone in the office feels a sense of responsibility in helping the consumer get a job. Many of the associates know people in the community, know the employers, relate to people well and make a major contribution to helping consumers become employed.

5. State Staff: The Commissioner of Education, Doug Christensen addressed the staff over a number of issues that are on his agenda and of interest to him. One of these issues is transition. He is supportive of VR. Frank heard from a number of staff that appreciated his comments.

Merwyn stated that State Staff gives the council a great opportunity to interact with staff and to attend informative training. The one thing he noticed was the length of employment of VR staff. He noticed a lot of staff that have been with the agency for 1- 5 years, and the next large group 15 years and greater.

Les discussed his concerns about transition. Who is responsible for training the students that need certain types of help? If the schools don't do it, who does? Some students are being provided professional services—billing Medicaid. Limited dollars—could be a problem in the future.

Susan Rucker said she recognizes importance of basic skills. She cautions on how staff looks at this so it doesn't turn into a screening. There are lots of people who dress funky and it is sometimes acceptable in places where in others it isn't.

Dave discussed that VR is working on finding better ways of dealing with this early in the process. Their new placement person is really good at spotting the problems right off and discussing this in a good way with the consumer. VR wants the consumer to be ready for work when applying for a job. VR is doing more in area of work readiness, one of the weakest areas for many consumers.

6. Frank mentioned the upcoming training for the State Rehabilitation Council that is being provided by RSA. The executive committee will discuss this further.
7. Frank discussed training 11 staff in positive psychology. Region VII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RCEP) is providing this. The approach focuses on how a person describes an event or situation. Consumer will be helped to look at their situation in a realistic way and reframe the event in a more constructive way. This opens possibilities to make changes. The training will provide a valuable sequence of tools to help consumers. Particularly those that are distressed about their situation. At the end of the training VR will then decide what to implement, what parts are appropriate and how management can support this. The Positive Psychology approach not only helps in the way we related to consumers, but also how staff relate to each other. Frank will provide more information to the council at a later date

## VI. Old Business none

## VII. New Business

### A. Statewide Employment Initiatives (*Susan Rucker*)

Susan distributed the handout from People First of Nebraska, Inc. titled "Position Paper". They are a self-advocacy organization that represents Nebraskans with developmental disabilities, the right for all Nebraskans to work in a competitive job of their choice.

They support getting rid of sheltered workshops. People First are working on statewide employment initiatives for people with development disabilities. They brought in a consultant, policy analyst and DD Advisor from New Jersey. They met with Developmental Disability Services (DDS) to talk about how to promote this idea. There is the belief that there are some financial disincentives. Would like to see blending the funding of VR and DDS dollars.

Florida has put together a task force to address the issue of transition students. Tennessee is taking a broad approach to reducing the population in the sheltered workshops statewide. There is a misconception that sheltered workshops provide transition, this should be a place of last resort.

They took this idea to the advisor for the DD committee. They are required to have a state plan in place, but there hasn't been one for 9 years. Would like to invite VR to the table in planning, to offer more employment opportunities to folks.

B. Annual Review Changes (*Don Crouch & Sandy Ham*)

Don discussed that one of the requirements of the SRC is to prepare and submit the annual report to governor and Feds. Timing is problem in preparing the report as the program cost chart won't be completed till the end of January and the report is due in January. This indicates the amount of money spent on administration and client services. If we don't include the chart we could have it by the end of the year. If we waited for the chart it wouldn't be ready till April or May.

Should we drop the chart? Is the delay an issue? Could we use estimated figures.

Merwyn made the motion to have two annual reports, a preliminary copy for the Feds and do the official annual review at the end. Les seconded the motion. The motion to have two annual reports was approved.

C. Transition Project (*Marcella Ziska & Sherry Gust-Wolfrom*) 1:00 p.m.

Marci and Sherry have been involved in transition for years at varying levels. VR is primarily serving the juniors and seniors statewide. Various teams have done some different things in schools getting group services to the younger kids. The Omaha project focuses on the younger kids age 14-16.

RSA did a national study on what needs to be done in transition using an independent group from Colorado. Frank stated that we already know what needs to be done and that this has been surveyed many times. Need to take what we already know and act on it. VR has taken two productive people (Marci & Sherry) off their caseload to focus on transition. VR is giving up the number of successful outcomes now to demonstrate and document what needs to be done in transition. Staff will spend the first year preparing materials, outlines, etc. The second year we will then take this information to selected groups to help administer transition. Students will be coming out of schools better prepared and will create successful outcomes in the long run.

Sherry sat down with staff whom had been previously doing transition and came up with a list of what was needed and wanted along with a plan to start the 1<sup>st</sup> year setting up a schedule with the schools. She covers 16-20 schools on a monthly basis. Services are done in a group format and because of the group format have added 14 year olds to the mix. This is employment driven i.e., filling out applications, independent living, interviews, job seeking skills, employment success skills and JSS assessment. When they prepare for graduation, placement people will come in and meet with the students. The schools like that VR is involved and they

have heard that age 14 should be a priority, giving VR more time to work with these types of students helping them to be better prepared.

Marci started working with four schools in April of 2001, working in rural schools outside of Fremont with adults as an evaluator/career planner, as well as doing some counseling and planning. The adults she was seeing had poor job histories and feels this could have been prevented if VR could have worked with them in high school. The teachers in Fremont came up with a plan to start working with freshmen, letting them and their parents know that services are available.

The junior year is spent looking for a job, VR providing job-seeking skills, working on mock applications and mock interviews. These are basic skills she found that lots of high schools students didn't know or have.

The senior year is individual planning with the students. What is the most appropriate goal for them, etc.

This past summer Sherry and Marci visited each of the offices across the state to find out the materials they had and to try to put together a plan to make transition easier.

Marci and Sherry outlined the following reasons this project is important

- a. To help students be motivated to stay in school.
- b. Easier to get a higher paying job if they have a diploma or GED. Taking the skills they already have to help them get the job they want.
- c. Teaching them to advocate for themselves. Self-esteem is a huge issue. They have taken an interactive approach such as playing games like "Job Seeking Skills Jeopardy" etc. Makes this fun as well as helping students learn what is appropriate.
- d. Employment Success Skills. Being proactive with parents and teachers. If the student finds a job they like, they will more likely to stay with the job.
- e. Come up with a format to provide group services across the state.
- f. Creating a bunch of tools and resources for the schools.

Frank has devised a 5-part format:

1. provide certain services to the schools
2. creating in class activities
3. community activities
4. evaluate this process
5. revise the process.

We need to make sure we are providing things that they really need. For the schools specifically we need to make available information so it is easy for them to refer clients to VR. Staff in schools change all the time, need to keep the communication open with the schools and VR. Lots of teachers are not clear about transition services and adult services. Educating them on the differences and how to access them. There needs to be a increasing parent involvement. Schools find getting the parents involved at the appropriate level a big challenge.

Schools love VR as we are link to the job market and the community as schools don't have time to figure out what jobs are available as they are busy teaching "No Child Left Behind."

Students get the opportunity to meet business owners and explore fields that they haven't thought of, jobs that could require an apprenticeship, trade option, military, etc. Sherry and Marci plan to come up with a tool kit to help create consistency between the offices and schools across the state. Teachers and staff would be able to put out various activities and make copies. There would be instructions on how to complete the activity—a step-by-step format.

Sherry sent out questionnaires to the parents and has been pretty successful receiving these back. Parents have been contacting her concerning issues with their child. What is learned from this is documented so that everyone involved has the information.

There was a question about going to private schools if they have an IEP already in place? Marci stated they would serve them if they know about them. Every office does transition a little bit differently.

Susan questioned the use of portfolios as a collaboration piece. Think they are a great idea to help keep all the information in one place at the school. Marci is teaching teachers on how to create/use a portfolio. Since schools destroy their records after a certain time, this would help to put the documentation in one place giving the kids an exit packet.

Marci showed members a book on Nebraska/Iowa apprenticeships from the Building and Construction Trades Department. Cheryle will contact them for more copies.

## VIII. Reports

### A. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

Merwyn appreciates the format it is in, easy to read. Vic is finishing up the CAP annual report and will give this to the executive committee. Last year the Hotline for Disability Services received 1072 calls with this year being 1925. CAP was involved with 56 cases last year and 65 this year.

CAP meets with VR leadership on a quarterly basis. CAP presents to VR Leadership the closed CAP cases for that quarter. It is during this time VR Leadership and CAP determine if there are training issues or policies that need to be revisited based on the CAP cases. VR appreciates working with CAP this way when in most states it is through lawsuits.

### B. SILC Report (*Tim Kolb*)

Legislative endeavors—the Medicaid Buy In has been revised recently by the Medicare Moderation Act. There are approximately 28,400 people being served by Medicaid. Even in the worse case we would be giving 14,200 individuals a chance to be employed by having the Medicaid Buy In.

The other initiative on the table is the risk statute. The right of individuals to take risks so they have a chance to go to work. To get work you have to be able to take some risks to do it. We anticipate that this will be passed by the legislature.

Another issue is the funding cap for individuals to have personal assistance. This needs to be reviewed and adjusted. People with severe disabilities cannot be judged accurately by the average. Their cost will be higher than the average. They are trying to change this administratively.

C. ATP Report (*Mark Schultz*)

No report at this time.

D. Committee Reports

1. Client Services Satisfaction (*Sandy Ham*)

The committee finalized questions for a survey directed at VR staff concerning the IPE notebook. The questions will be formatted and a final version will be emailed to all VR staff. They can either email back their responses or they can print it out and send it back anonymously. They will report the feedback received from the survey at the next meeting.

Motion was made by Merwyn to allow the committee to get the staff survey out. Pearl seconded the motion. The motion carried.

All SRC members will get a copy of the final survey. The committee will develop questions for the client survey at the next meeting.

2. Interagency Annual Report (*Eileen Curry*)

The committee has compiled results from their survey. The goal was to look at statewide agency collaboration with emphasis toward greater Nebraska. When they reviewed the results they found that there was unhappiness in some areas of the state in the closing of several VR offices in greater Nebraska. The committee will meet with Don and get information from all the VR offices as to what their views are, taking a hard look at how things are going in greater Nebraska.

It was strongly suggested that the council to meet in at different location outside of Lincoln. Suggested was Grand Island, Kearney or Cozad. This would be for the April meeting.

This will be discussed in the executive session with the membership being polled to find out if they would be able to attend.

3. Strategic Issues (*Frank Lloyd*)

The committee is starting from scratch again and has come up with a new list of goals. The five areas they are looking at are:

1. To continue to create more opportunities through partnerships. The committee will continue to monitor the progress with the reform bill and VR's role related to that.

2. Loan program--VR equity assistance program. There are three banks that have \$50,000 plus. Marc Schultz has received and is administering the Telework grant sponsored by Easter Seals. This will provide loans for telephone connections to assist in starting a business from home.
  3. Support groups—looking at that collaborating with the various support groups, i.e., public rehab programs.
  4. Transition. Continue to review and work on that. Some federal opportunities to occur later next year.
  5. Partnership with the one stops and Dept of Labor.
- E. Agenda reopened. Don ask for the agenda to be reopened to discuss the training in Kansas City on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of March. Pearl made the motion and Merwyn seconded. The motion to reopen the agenda carried.

Don stated that he was going to talk about this in the executive session, but decided to bring it before the council. Frank mentioned that the training for Rehab Council members is planned for March 15<sup>th</sup> & 16 at the Westin Crown Center. The Feds wants the chairperson and a VR representative along with two other members to attend. They are preparing a PowerPoint presentation that staff can show to the rest of the council when they get back. Don stated that there are stipends to pay for four people. Pearl will be attending for NCBVI. Mike, Susan Rocker and Merwyn all would like to attend. Vic mentioned that she could attend if someone was unable to go. The Executive Committee will choose.

Eileen made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Les seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned. Next meeting is scheduled for February 8, 2005 at Quality Suites.